LETTERS

TO

THOMAS PAINE, &c.

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LETTERS

TO

THOMAS PAINE;

IN ANSWER TO HIS LATE PUBLICATION

ON

THE RIGHTS OF MAN:

SHEWING HIS ERRORS ON THAT SUBJECT;

AND

PROVING THE FALLACY OF HIS PRINCIPLES

AS APPLIED TO THE GOVERNMENT

OF

THIS COUNTRY.

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LETTER I.

SIR,

AS all men, who profeſs philanthropy, ought willingly to attend to opinions, though oppoſite to their own, I expect you will excuſe the freedom I take in addreſſing you, without ceremony, on a late publication, in your name, reſpecting the Rights of Man. You deſerve praiſe at leaſt for the choice of your ſubject; it opens to a fine field of philoſophic enquiry; and, if a new thought ſhall ariſe from ſpeculation, it will be like finding a valuable diamond in a mine which had been ſuppoſed exhauſted. I conceive it not to be impoſſible but by oppoſition,

even of the weakeſt ſort, you may acquire a new idea, or ſee an old one through a different medium; and if I ſhould be lucky enough to find my way to your mind, with any thing like a corrective, either ſweet or bitter, it will be conſiſtent with your deep and indefatigable reſearch to think it time not abſolutely loſt to have caſt your eye over my obſervations.

Your book is much talked of, and read with avidity; it is flattering to the feelings of the vulgar, who ſeldom take the trouble of thinking twice; and to thoſe, I believe, you are very convincing. I ſometimes am vain enough to flatter myſelf that I am not of that claſs; and I have thought oftener than once, that your labours are more than commonly fraught with error, or (what is much worſe) with deſign in being erroneous. The Rights of Man are your profeſſed ſubject; but malevolence againſt conſpicuous individuals, and the ſubverſion of our common-

wealth,

wealth, or, at leaſt, of its peace and good order, appear to be your diſpoſition and your aim. This I am the more ſurpriſed at, as you have gained ſome credit for Common Senſe; and the office of traducing even bad characters, or of pulling down the pillars of a ſtate, is not an argument of temperate virtue, that inclines to forgiveneſs, or of the genius of philanthropy, that ſmiles upon the bleſſings of mankind. Common Senſe, give me leave to tell you, has heretofore been a friend to which you was much indebted. Common Senſe brought you into notice, placed you in the now enviable ſeat of a ſtateſman, and wafted your fame, to us, acroſs the wide Atlantic; and it is not perhaps the happieſt mark of your prudence to abandon this cool friend at a time when you have moſt occaſion for aſſiſtance. But revolution is abroad, and enthuſiaſm is its guide. You ſcorn the vulgarly deliberate mode of correction. Governments have all become, or have long been "Augean ſtables,"

and "too abominately filthy to be clean-
"ſed by any thing ſhort of a complete and
"univerſal revolution:" and you think it virtuous, no doubt, to volunteer your whole force to effect ſo clean and perfect a change; for, talking on this ſubject, you ſay, "When it becomes neceſſary to do a "thing, the whole heart and ſoul ſhould "go into the meaſure, or not attempt it." Your nature ſeems warm, and paſſion, which you ſuffer to command you too much, leads you into mazes of folly and miſtake, which you have not temper enough to rectify. You are a ſort of choleric man, that will ſooner knock his own head againſt the wall than not be revenged of ſomebody. Mr. Burke has rouſed, in a very uncommon degree, the natural majeſty of your reſentment; and, all through your paſſionate pages, you never loſe the appearance of an opportunity, fair or unfair, to mark him with your fury: but you attack a powerful and ſkilful adverſary; your weapon cannot

reach

reach his vulnerable part, and, ſtung with fretted anguiſh, you brandiſh your deſperate abuſe in the face of the whole Britiſh nation. You complain bitterly of Mr. Burke's want of politeneſs, in ſearching the "vocabulary of Adam" for epithets to load the members of the French Aſſembly with; and, in the ſame breath, vent a long winded liſt of no very well choſen modern appellations, with which you inundate him pretty copiouſly. There is one excellent obſervation in your book, which I mean to profit by, and, in your next literary eſſay I wiſh you would make it your motto: "When the tongue or the "pen is let looſe, in a frenzy of paſſion, "it is the man, not the ſubject, that be-"comes exhauſted."

Did you mean to revenge the cauſe of France on Mr. Burke, by depreciating England? or are you one of thoſe few univerſal citizens, one of thoſe friends to mankind, one of thoſe that watch for the

good

good of this world, who, ſeeing us eaſy under the appearances of happineſs, rouze us from the lethargy of ſecurity, and awake us to a ſenſe of poſſible danger? It is juſt poſſible that you have an honeſt virtue that may deſpiſe etiquette, and blunt incivility may be your ſtile of writing. If you are a philanthropiſt, you have a very miſanthropic way of ſhewing it: if you are vigilant, you are likewiſe noiſy, and ſpread an alarm when there is not even the appearance of danger. But, believe me, I doubt your virture, and your care, and am old faſhioned enough to imagine that my rights are as well defined and protected, by the conſtitution of my country, as they can poſſibly be by any burning republican, or adventuring ſpeculatiſt.

It is not my intention, in theſe few remarks, to enter into a minute diſcuſſion of the parts, or the unity of our conſtitution; at this day it would be almoſt impertinent.

pertinent. As to Mr. Burke, if I think rightly of him, his mind is of too elevated a caſt to ſtoop to the indignity of defence; and his reflections will protect themſelves. But my intention is to ſhew you to the world, and to yourſelf, in the ſame general outline you appear to me. You want a reflector, and as I could wiſh that you would be right, I ſhall only endeavour to ſhew you where you are wrong. If I am miſtaken, and that your thoughts are juſt, you are a very prodigy in thinking; a very hurricane in argument; not the flowers of Mr. Burke alone, but the Engliſh oak ſnaps, like a ſaplin, in your hand: but if the reverſe, you muſt acknowledge that you are a bluſterer indeed, and that you muſt again be pent up, like a ſchool boy, in your leſſons, and not be turned looſe, a froward pupil of the academy for maniacs, into the ſchool of knowledge and moderation.

I am far from denying you the ſort of ability

ability you manifeſt: I willingly give you your due: did I think you entirely deſtitute of dangerous ingenuity, you ſhould not be at the trouble of hearing from me: but had not your thoughts been quite ſo contradictory (their being looſe is in favour of your deſign) they might have puzzled a much wiſer head than you ſeem to wear to have anſwered them with proper effect: for, though you do but ſkim along the ſurface of human paſſions, touching more deeply on thoſe which you make it your intereſt to move, the difficulty would lye in arranging the ideas of your readers, in ſuch order as they might reflect, as they advanced. It does not ſeem to be ſo much your care to preſerve reaſon, as to deſtroy it: to diſcover truth, as to conceal it: to unite men, as to divide them: why you have made theſe your ſtudy I do not take upon myſelf to prove. Whatever motives may impel your mind, whatever may be your political calling, or your private character, I

leave

leave to the notice of the ſtate, and the hiſtory of your life. It is to your writings, particularly, that I would attract the attention of my countrymen: I would beg of the multitude to conſider, that they have the happineſs of living in an age of knowledge, and enquiry; where nothing within the reach of human capacity, is taken for granted, before it is proved; where the mere man, the naked ſon of nature, is taught to ſmooth the roughneſs of his formation, by the delightful action of ſocial union, and civil concord; an age in which our paſſions, tumultuous as they are, are arreſted by ourſelves, and given over to the chaſtening hand of civil government. I wiſh every man would determine for himſelf, if he would determine by his reaſon. Any one that will do this, and then tell me that you are profound, learned, and incontrovertible; that Mr. Burke is ſhallow, ignorant, and abſurd; and give me a proof of either; I will acknowledge his truth, thank him

for his information, and honour his wiſdom: but until this be done, that which touches only the paſſions, affects private intereſt, and opens a door to the deſperate and diſorderly, is the proper object for detection and reproach, and the proper mirror in which to ſhew diſcord its own deformity.

A ſhort, though perhaps not a pleaſing, way of proving the weakneſs of your obſervation, might be, by oppoſing their own contradictions, which are not unfrequent; or to write an index to your book; but it is not alone your weakneſs, but the miſchievous tendency of your arguments, that I would prove; and this is to be done by ſhewing their want of foundation in the principles of morality and policy.

You take every opportunity of extolling the French, in their abſtract principles, of rights and government; and never

never ſuffer an occaſion to paſs you by, where you think you may depreſs this country, by the compariſon. So far as the principles, on which the French revolted, are good, I wiſh them ſucceſs: I will not revile their growing conſtitution, their aſſembly, or their king; I will not injure France ſo much as to draw it into compariſon with this country; you ſay "Mr. Burke has ſignified "his intention of undertaking, at ſome "future opportunity, a compariſon be-"tween the conſtitutions of England "and France," and when he does I am not apprehenſive but he will do honour to the ſide he eſpouſes. Why then did you not wait for this compariſon, before you diſgorged ſo large a portion of your malevolence againſt the conſtitution of this country? but you ſay it was retaliation, on Mr. Burke. If Mr. Burke cannot be "pardoned on the ſcore of man-"ners, or juſtified on that of policy," as you ſay he cannot, for "commencing

"an unproved attack upon the people "of France, and the national aſſembly," how can you be pardoned, or juſtified, in following his example, even to rancorous aſperity? If Mr. Burke was wrong, he might have been wrong through miſtake; but you have not even this plea; you adopt an error at the moment you condemn it. Your book is a chapter of errors; and it is not for the ſake of being unmannerly, I tell you, that you ſeem unacquainted with the principles of your ſubject: you often uſe terms in oppoſite meanings, and betray your ignorance moſt, when you moſt ſeem ſwelled with the pride of your learning. I will firſt endeavour to explain terms, and give them a fixed meaning, and then meet you fairly in the way of plain reaſon. I think it more neceſſary to enter into this explanation, as it will make us better underſtood, to a particular claſs of readers, the laborious and induſtrious part of the community, on whoſe underſtandings alone,

alone, you are likely to obtain your intention. I am far from conſidering theſe as not meriting every reſpectful attention; they are the vital part of every ſtate, the eſſence of its power, and the orb of its glory; and, if my humble labour can extract the poiſon of unneceſſary diſcontent, from a ſingle mind, which you may have lodged there, and reſtore it to rational tranquillity, I ſhall be happy in having done one of the duties of a citizen.

Your principles are, firſt, that the rights of man deſcend from God, and that they are, therefore, independent of ſociety; for you ſay, "the illuminating and divine "principle of the equal rights of man (for it has its origin from the Maker of man) relates not only to the living *individuals*, &c."

Secondly, as "the vanity, and pre-"ſumption, of governing beyond the "grave, is the moſt ridiculous, and inſo-

lent

" lent of all tyrannies" that dead men ſhould not controul the living.

Thirdly, If one generation aſſumes a power to " change itſelf from a legiſla-" tor, to a teſtator, it operates to preclude " the conſent of the ſucceeding genera-" tion, and the preclusion of conſent is " deſpotiſm." That, therefore, laws are no farther binding than during the lives of the makers; for as every man, or every generation, is equal, and independent, and competent to judge, it is an uſurpation of power, unfounded in right, for any man, or any generation, to make laws for his, or their children.

From hence it is inferred, that ſucceſſion of any ſort, is deſpotiſm; and election only, juſt. You admit " that civil go-" vernment is *neceſſary*, but that civil go-" vernment is republican government," and, conſequently, all governments that are not republican, cannot be civil.

I cannot

I cannot help obſerving that you deliver your opinions like an oracle; they bear any meaning: but, as I have very little faith in your inſpiration, I take advantage of my right, to deny your poſitions, and to call upon you for proofs; which I think, not only you are unable to produce, but alſo the writers from whom you have crudely ſtolen your crazy metaphyſics. But, leſt you ſhould cover your ignorance in your ſilence, I will oppoſe ſome principles to yours, and offer ſome reaſons, in ſupport of their juſtneſs.

Firſt, then, I deny, that man, as an individual abſtracted from ſociety, and without a knowledge of ſociety, can conceive any equal rights of man, or that this conception can ariſe from any thing but an experience of wrongs, ſuch as the improper uſe of ſuperior ſtrength, paſſions, &c. and theſe are conſequences only, of numbers.

Secondly,

Secondly, if the rights of man were independent of ſociety, (as it would be abſurd to ſuppoſe that individual man, would be author of his own individual wrongs) the ſecurity of thoſe rights would not require the interpoſition of laws.

Thirdly, as it is impoſſible, in the natural courſe of things, that man can exiſt individually, or ever did, agreeably to the deſigns of his being, he muſt, therefore, neceſſarily be a creature of ſociety.

Fourthly, that ſociety is beſt, by the organization of which the members of it are moſt happy; and, as ſocieties cannot be organized without laws, laws muſt be therefore neceſſary for the happineſs of men, and coeval with ſocial, or actual rights; and now, ſir, you may contend, as long as you pleaſe, for ſpeculative rights, and your own "individual ſove-"reignty to govern yourſelf."

If

If your principles tended to the making men more happy than they are, I would ſupport them; but the ſtream of your deſigns, though ſmooth and inviting on its ſurface, is not deep enough to hide the muddy materials at the bottom, which, if once diſturbed (though they neceſſarily muſt ſubſide ſome time or other) muſt occaſion temporary trouble and confuſion. Democracy is your aim; and by tracing its origin to heaven, which you have done, you would ſubvert every other ſpecies of government; and while you praiſe natural equality in France, (which you ſay ſubſiſts there, but which every body elſe will deny) you would break down every degree of ſubordination here.

You adopt the declaration of rights, as drawn up by the French Aſſembly, and acknowledge your opinion to be, that "the three firſt articles comprehend, "in general terms, the whole of a decla-

"ration of rights". Had this declaration ſtood without your comment and adoption, I would be ſilent on it, for it is not my purpoſe nor my wiſh to interfere in the ſmalleſt degree with the affairs of France.

I always underſtood, before your obſervations on this declaration reached me, that the framers of it meant nothing more, by natural rights, than the natural neceſſity of providing ſocial order; and I now believe they meant no more. But you have given it a different meaning; and, in endeavouring to controvert your meaning, I would not be ſuppoſed to attattack the authors of the declaration (though it is ill enough imagined) but you.

It appears to me that you do not underſtand the principles of this declaration, as you conſtantly uſe the word *natural*, in an abſtract ſenſe, totally diſtinct from ſociety.

ciety. As a proof of this you ſay, when on the origin of government, that "man "muſt have exiſted before governments "exiſted:" therefore, as ſociety cannot exiſt without ſome rule of government, man muſt have been ſeparate from ſociety, and without ſocial rights; and you always ſupport the idea of "perſonal" and "ſo-"vereign right," to "produce a govern-"ment" in every individual.

Now let us take a view of this famous declaration, in your ſenſe of it.

The firſt article ſays, "Men are born, "and always continue free, and equal, "in reſpect of their rights."—By this you mean abſtract freedom, and equality, which are merely ideal, and exiſt only in the ſickneſs of weak minds; ſhades, to which experience never could aſcribe a ſubſtance. If man can poſſeſs rights abſtractedly, it muſt be allowed that thoſe rights are limited, or there could

be nothing wrong; for if there were wrong, and right was not limited, man might be ſaid to poſſeſs the *right* of doing *wrong*, which is nonſenſe. An individual, conſidered ſeparately from ſociety, can only be ſaid to have *wants*, and the powers of providing for thoſe wants: *rights* are called into action; that is to ſay, reality, by agreement, or laws, which are the ſureſt human providence for wants. You are fond of referring to the rights of Adam. Take the doctrine of creation, as it has been handed down to us, (though it is not a propoſition to argue from, as it is above our comprehenſion) and for a moment ſuppoſe the certainty of there having been a time, when one only man lived on the face of the earth. What were his rights? He muſt have been without language, and perhaps almoſt, if not entirely, the exerciſe of reaſoning powers. As it was impoſſible that he could have received a wrong from any other perſon, it would

be

be ridiculous to ſay that he received wrongs from himſelf; and there being no wrong, in this caſe, we cannot ſay there could be right either phyſical or moral; for if you admit of either, you muſt admit of both; and it is every way abſurd to ſuppoſe Adam to have been both right and wrong. Individual man is, therefore, naturally ſpeaking, an impoſſible thing, a ſort of a noun adjective; he cannot ſtand alone—born from nothing—the miracle of his time—nature diſowns him, and he nature—the firſt and laſt of a ſpecies—a creature with powers, but without powers to exerciſe them—a denial of the wiſdom of the Divinity—a diſowning of his power—a contradiction of his univerſality—a ſatire on his mercy—an impeachment of his juſtice, and an affront upon his goodneſs! Here is the animal in whom you delight! from whom you catch "ſoul-animating ſentiments"—the idol of the democrate —the glory of the ignorant!—the ſhapeleſs

leſs monſter of the *mob!* Into this chimera have you reduced yourſelf, by ſupporting it, and I cannot help conſidering you as an adjective—a miracle—a Titon, heaping up mountains of ſterile arguments, againſt the attributes of God and the peace mankind.

The inference is, that "civil diſtinc-"tions can be founded only on public "utility." If the ſpirit of this inference is, that civil diſtinctions are uſeful, only as they maintain public good, I agree with it; but if it does not, it is nonſenſe; for civil diſtinctions, if they were founded only on public utility, would ſignify public utility; that is to ſay, practical good (for public utility can mean nothing elſe) to have been antecedent to civil diſtinctions, or elſe civil diſtinctions could not have been founded upon it; when, on the contrary, as civil diſtinctions are neceſſary to the preſervation of public utility,

utility, public utility muſt be a conſe-quence, flowing from civil diſtinctions.

The ſecond article ſays, " The end of " all political aſſociations is the preſerva-" tion of the *natural* and *impreſcriptible* " rights of man," and defines thoſe rights to be " liberty, property, ſecurity, and " reſiſtance of oppreſſion." This, at the beſt, has a very indefinite meaning ; but, taking it expreſsly in your ſenſe, I deny the whole of it : for the end of political aſſociations is to *reſtrain*, not to *preſerve*, the *natural man* ; to let him taſte the ſweets of his dependance upon others, and others upon him ; by which he unites in the general compact, that gives him poſſeſſion of ſolid rights, and does not deprive him of the leaſt ſocial benefit. Theſe rights that are called natural, are ſtrictly ſocial ; and abſtract man muſt be ignorant of their meaning. He can know nothing of liberty, property, ſe-curity, and reſiſtance of oppreſſion ; for reſtriction,

reſtriction, circumſcription, and power, are things that never could come within his mind; therefore he cannot be ſaid to have a *right* to liberty, for it is impoſſible he can meet with reſtraint; nor can he have a *right* to property, ſince there can be no other claimant; nor a *right* to ſecurity, for he can meet no oppoſition; nor to reſiſtance of oppreſſion, for he is the ſupreme power.

You think nothing more eaſy than to draw a line between natural, and civil, rights. "Natural rights, you ſay, are "thoſe which appertain to man, in right "of his exiſtence." This is another proof of your abſtract idea of right; for it is certain, that once a man is in exiſtence, his exiſtence neither depends upon law, nor ſociety; and, therefore, you inſiſt that all his natural powers muſt be natural rights: but this you yourſelf diſprove, by ſaying what natural rights are, which, among others, are "rights of acting, as

an

" an *individual* for *his own* comfort, and " happineſs, which are not *injurious* to " the natural rights of *others*." If man has a right to exerciſe the powers of his exiſtence, which you contend he has, and that he has not a right to exerciſe them but in a particular way, it is abſurd to call this reſtriction *individual*, or *natural*, or any thing but ſocial, or legal; for if a man, in the exerciſe of his natural powers, is obliged to act in conformity to the natural powers (or rights if you will) of another, it proves ſome connection to ſubſiſt between the two, and neither of them can be ſaid to be any longer in a ſtate of ſolitary individuality.

" Every civil right (you ſay) has for " its foundation, ſome natural right, pre- " exiſting in the individual, but to the " enjoyment of which his individual " power is not, in all caſes, ſufficiently " competent." You aſſert here, that ſociety ſtrengthens the natural power of

enjoying one's rights; and, in the very next page as positively assert that, "so-"ciety *grants* man nothing." But let us pass over this contradiction, and suppose what you say to be true, *that civil, grow out of, natural rights*, it must destroy one of your distinctions; for if civil right grows out of natural right, you must allow it to be a necessary consequence, as it proves that nature is the essence of civilization, and this proof shews the impossibility of abstract rights, or of any individual being separate from society.

The third article says, "the nation is "essentially the source of all sovereignty; "nor can any individual, or any body of "men, be entitled to any authority, "which is not expressly derived from "it."

It is very plain that, where sovereignty does exist, the nation is essentially the source of it; for there could be no sovereignty

reignty if there were no nation; and as for the title of authority being expreſsly derived from the nation, it is ſaying nothing; for what is meant by the nation is not defined; and a nation may be conſidered in different views, ſuch as perſonal, collective, or delegated.

Though we both come to one point, in at leaſt agreeing in the ultimate propriety of laws, yet we differ in our cauſes of laws and forms, or effects of government. You infer that republicaniſm is the natural and beſt form of every government; and I endeavour to diſprove it.

I am,

Sir, &c.

THE AUTHOR.

LETTER II.

SIR,

AS the deſign and end of government are public good, that government is neceſſarily the beſt, under which the people are moſt happy. Whatever be the form of that government, it ſhould be held ſacred, and, if poſſible, never ſuffer from the innovation of novelty. Our ideas of the moſt ſimple forms of ſociety, muſt depend a great deal on imagination; but it is certain that ſociety is a neceſſity of the nature of man, and that ſociety cannot exiſt without reglations, either tacit or expreſſed; and every ſtage of ſociety that is not governed by expreſs laws, muſt therefore

therefore be governed at leaſt by the relative duties, which are an authority in nature, and unrepiningly aſſented to. When communities increaſe, and ſeparate intereſts take the form of a general intereſt, new laws muſt be deviſed. In this the paſſions and intereſts of individuals muſt give way, and be made to co-operate with general good. Here it is proper to conſider every man vicious, as there could be no occaſion to circumſcribe his virtues. If men were left to the government of themſelves, or ſociety left to its own direction, inſtead of finding rights in a mutual dependence on conſcious rectitude, ſecurity could be neither expected or known.

I do not aſſume the privilege of dogmatically aſſerting the propriety of any particular mode of government; and to gentlemen that are haſty in their determinations, or raſh in their political controverſies, I would recommend moderation.

You

You and I agree in the propriety of civil government; but when you ſay that "all "civil government is republican govern-"ment," you leave me in amazement at the boldneſs of your expreſſions, and at the eaſe of your determinations. To you and me the word *civil*, muſt have different meanings; and perhaps you have found out an etimology which has eſcaped the inquiry of the plain ſcholars of this country. If this is the caſe, it is not liberal in you to keep it in reſerve, as it can be of no further uſe to you than to confound any poor writer with the blaze of your knowledge, whoſe ideas of civilization do not accord with your own: But as you have not explained, I will take the word civil in its common acceptation. Your opinion is, that all parts of this conſtitution which are not republican, cannot be civil, and muſt therefore militate againſt public good. You allow there are republican parts in the conſtitution, and deny that there is a conſtitution. This is a ſtrange

bravado.

bravado. But the conſtitution of this country, though it is only in part republican, the greateſt philoſophers, the moſt experienced ſtateſmen have allowed to be ſuperior to any ſimple republican form whatever, as tending more to the ſecurity of internal peace and freedom: and it is not denied, but by you, that the people of Great Britain are a civilized people, notwithſtanding their having a mixed government. The approbation and emulation of nations muſt go for ſomething in the proof of this; and it would ſeem that the completion of our character for civilization, waits only for the ſanction of your ſubſcription.

You go ſo far as to ſay, that if we have a government, it is uſurpation. If this be true, the people of this country muſt be ſlaves unknown to themſelves, and remain baſely ſatisfied with the ſemblance of freedom, while the goddeſs herſelf lies bound behind the throne. You exhibit, what you

you think, a proof of this, in a ſpecimen of your logical powers, which, indeed, when you do think proper to let looſe, preſs down every thing before them. You deny that government is a compact between the governors and the governed; as this, you ſay, would be putting the effect before the cauſe. "It has been thought," you ſay, "a conſiderable advance towards "eſtabliſhing the principles of freedom, "to ſay, that government is a compact "between thoſe who govern, and thoſe "who are governed; but this cannot be "true, becauſe it is putting the effect be-"fore the cauſe." If compact means unity, compoſition, agreement, (which I believe it does) a compact muſt be a willingneſs to maintain ſomething already thought wiſe to be maintained, but which is not yet maintained by ſufficient power, and therefore cannot have an actual exiſtence. The maintenance of this ſomething, which we will ſuppoſe to be civil liberty, is an effect produced by the exe-

cution

cution of the terms of this compact, in as much as civil liberty could not have been maintained before; for had it been maintained before, there had been no occaſion for the compact. You would prove your poſition by a mere aſſertion, without even the ſhew of argument. "As man," (you ſay) "muſt have exiſted before governments exiſted, there neceſſarily was a "time when governments did not exiſt; "and, conſequently, there could, originally, exiſt no governors, to form ſuch a "compact with." As I am not much in the habit of taking all your aſſertions for incontrovertible facts, I muſt deſire you will offer me ſome ſort of proof, that *man muſt have exiſted before all ſorts of government, tacit, or expreſſed.* As you ſeem to have fully as much imagination as reaſon, or underſtanding, I have ſome reliance on your making the attempt, at leaſt, in your uſual light and eaſy manner; but, at preſent, I beg to aſk you a few queſtions on this head. Can you ſuppoſe a collec-

tion of well grown, ſightly lads and laſſes, to have ſprang at once into a community? If you can, no doubt you will allow that there muſt have been ſome intuitive rule of rectitude in each, and that this rule muſt have ſerved, for a time, in place of laws. This particular rule, however, could be of no uſe, except it was beſides a general rule; and, ſuppoſing for a minute the poſſibility of this, if mankind could have at any time done without laws, from a natural principle of rectitude, it is poſſible they might do without laws for ever; but, on the contrary, if it cannot be proved that they could, it is impertinent to ſuppoſe the caſe to have ever exiſted.

Let us put your poſition, *That men were before governments*, into another view, and ſuppoſe any given number of men, ſeparated from the ſame number of communities, and meeting, ſo as to form one body; will you ſay that theſe men are without a government, while they are without

without an agreement to be governed? It is impoſſible; for each man muſt carry a ſocial principle about him; the immediate effect of ſocial habits acquired in his late communities.

You again aſſert, that "*individuals* "*themſelves*, each in his own perſonal and "ſovereign right, *entered into a compact with* "*each other*, to produce a government: "and this is the only mode in which go- "vernments have a right to ariſe, and the "only principle on which they have a "a right to exiſt." I ſuppoſe you have miſtated your own meaning, or elſe you can have no meaning at all. You probably might have meant to ſay, that *thoſe who were found to be moſt able in deviſing and arranging the principles of government, were elected governors by unanimous conſent.* Even this would mean but little; and if I have taken a diſagreeable liberty, in giving your words any meaning, they may be reſcued from me, and ſtand on their own

defence. If there cannot be a government but by univerſal compact, the whole order of relative duties are at once deranged and deſtroyed. But even if this be granted, it certainly cannot be the only principle on which governments have a right to exiſt; for an agreement to *form* the principles of a conſtitution, cannot be the ſame with an agreement to *put them into practice*; and if you do not mean practical government, you mean nothing, and only confound terms.

You are fond of the word Compact, and thus apply it to France: "The Na-"tional Aſſembly is the true, perſonal, "ſocial compact; the nation in its origi-"nal character." Your idea of *perſonal* compact, is beſt known to yourſelf; and a nation, in its original character, you have declared to be a nation antecedent to government. Here, I am afraid, is a very irreconcilable contradiction: for, if the National Aſſembly is the true, perſonal, ſocial

ſocial compact, you muſt mean (if you attach any meaning to compact) that *it is the true, perſonal, ſocial government:* and if it is, at the ſame time, the nation in its *original character*, that is, *antecedent to government*, the National Aſſembly muſt be the *true, perſonal, ſocial government, without a government*; and Mr. Burke, with all his fine imagination, and elegantly true ſeverity, never dreamed of placing it in ſo truly ridiculous a point of view.

You have not been leſs cruel to the conſtitution of France; (for you refer to it as a conſtitution, even in its preſent ſtate). You ſay "the authority of future "aſſemblies will be to legiſlate, according to "the *principles* and *forms* preſcribed in that "conſtitution; and if experience ſhould "hereafter ſhew, that *alterations, amend-*"*ments*, or *additions* are *neceſſary*, the con-"ſtitution will point out the *mode* by "which ſuch *things* ſhall be *done*, and not "leave it to the diſcretionary power of the

"future

"future government." This is saying, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, that *although future aſſemblies ſhall not have authority to legiſlate, contrary to the principles and forms of the preſent conſtitution; and that, if it ſhall be ſhewn hereafter, that the preſent conſtitution ought to be changed, it will point out the mode how itſelf* (for your words, *ſuch things*, can apply only to the *principles* and *forms* of *itſelf*) *ſhall be changed; by which change* (it being no longer the preſent conſtitution) *it muſt neceſſarily deprive future aſſemblies of authority to legiſlate; and future governments cannot have diſcretionary power.*

But admitting, for a moment, the poſſibility of a written conſtitution being capable of pointing out the mode of its own change, and that future aſſemblies ſhall have power to legiſlate; ſuch alterations as may take place, muſt be ſuppoſed to be for the better. Even this will appear ludicrous enough. It will prove that the conſtitution, if thus altered, will be more

wiſe

wiſe than the preſent conſtitution; and this is only ſaying, in other words, (moſt ridiculouſly indeed) *that the leſs wiſe can dictate the mode by which it ſhall be made more wiſe.*

Though you ſeem to wiſh that your arguments ſhould favour democracy, they appear, to me, to ſatyriſe it; and, if your intentions were to burleſque its principle, I would ſay that you are very ſucceſsful. What are the boaſted advantages of democracy? *ſpeculative equality*, and "*individual ſovereignty!*" But when was it known that theſe were practiſed, but in times of immorality and diſorder? When, and where, was there a republic of conſequence enough to be remembered in hiſtory, that called upon *every man* for his *particular advice* and *choice* in the *management of its affairs?* Equality is its firſt, but only its ideal *right*; and election its viſionary pride and its ſuppoſed freedom. Every man is *told* of his *equal right*; but

power

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power

power will certainly be found always in the *few*; and this is an inevitable conſequence; for, call the *multitude* together; let them ſurround the awful majeſty of juſtice: that they would *equal* her in *blindneſs*, I believe, but it would be from a too great confuſion of *ſeeing*. There would be too much *equality*, in one ſcale, for the *eveneſs* of the *balance*; and they would hurt their own fingers with her ſword. Where all is equal, there can be no ſubordination; and where there is no ſubordination, there can be no regularity. The ambitious or ſucceſsful leader of an army; the perſuaſive orator, or more perſuaſive wealthy citizen, who can lure a party to his ſide by preſent bribery, or hope of future reward, is put into power; while the reflecting and unoſtentatiouſly virtuous man is left to the retirement of his cloſet, as a creature not remembered in the maze of anarchy, faction, private intereſt, and metaphyſical equality. The

The Achæan government was, perhaps, the moſt perfect democracy of antiquity; but, even if they had not had their internal feuds, (as it is very well known they had) a petty commonwealth, little more than the circuit of a common ſight, ſuch as it was, is not to be held up as a model to a powerful and flouriſhing nation like Great Britain.

The democracy of Athens is referred to, by all admirers of powerful and elegant republicaniſm; but, I believe, there never was a ſtate more fraught with faction and intrigue, or where the great body of the people was leſs conſulted. They had their *equal rights of men*, yet trampled on *equality* in their conqueſts, and violated thoſe very *rights*, by *law*, in the uſe of ſlaves; and, with all their ſuppoſed arrangement of regularity, their aſſemblies were filled with licentiouſneſs, tumult, and diſorder. Theſe were inevitable conſequences of their laws. How

dreadful muſt it be, when there is an end of all law, though but to give birth to law! when the multitude, mad with their *equality* and *rights*, and ignorant of every civil and political principle of government, meet, in their *natural ſovereignty*, *irregularly* to deviſe *regularity*; *immorally* to invent *laws*; and *intereſtedly* to *elect governors!*

The little republics of Greece, and the infancy of the Roman ſtate, were built upon general equality, and were likely to continue longeſt on this principle, while their communities were confined to their original numbers; but this principle has been always known to yield as communities increaſe in number and power. When the burghers of Italy were admitted free citizens of Rome, and took a part in public affairs, popular deliberations and elections became more and more jarring and diſorderly; and new and compound forms of government began to riſe, for

greater

greater ſecurity, though upheld in doubt and fear; and the general mind, diſappointed and harraſſed by continual apprehenſions, opened the way to ambition and monarchy. Theſe were the great cauſes of the power of Marius, Sylla, Pompey, and Cæſar; and which at laſt effected the diſſolution of the Roman commonwealth.

The Romans, in the time of their republic, felt all the miſeries of a periodical government, particularly in the election of magiſtrates. Even at the time of their empire, when they had occaſion to appoint a prince, candidates appeared on the intereſt or ſtrength of factions; and, the election being generally decided by *power*, inſtead of *choice*, the monarch aſcended the ſeat of government covered with the blood of the people.

If you will continue to ſay, that *elective government is the only civil government*, I am prepared not to be ſurpriſed at any thing

that you may think anſwerable to the end of your purpoſe, to ſay or aſſert. But it appears to me, that that government is certainly moſt wiſe in which our rights are moſt clearly defined, and by which they are moſt firmly ſecured; and the means of that ſecurity I believe to be, an unbroken and an uninterrupted progreſſion of that government which ſo defines, and ſo ſecures them; and the people of this country can ſay, with pride and truth, that their conſtitution does theſe.

The conſtitution of this country has ſo often been a ſubject of praiſe to learned and political men, that little need be ſaid in its defence; but, as you pompouſly exalt democratic election to preſs down our law of hereditary ſucceſſion, I mean to ſay a few words on this ſubject; though it is almoſt cowardly to oppoſe a condemned, a diſregarded, and obſolete opinion.

You

You dwell much on the legal phraſe of "*binding, &c. for ever*;" and this but proves your ignorance of the genius of law, or elſe that ſome private deſign lurks under your zeal for free election. That which is not in the power of man to alter, muſt undoubtedly have had its origin in ſomething ſuperior to man; but that which man cannot morally alter, that is to ſay for the better, the law, in its very eſſence ſays, and juſtly too, ſhall remain for *ever*, becauſe it *ought to remain for ever*; though it is the very ſame eſſence of law that alters, reforms, and even revolves, as circumſtances and occaſions require for public good. If our rights are ſecured by the law of ſucceſſion, and continue uninterruptedly, it is better than any other law which can be effective only in the uncertain period of any man's exiſtence.

You enquire into the right of a particular family to eſtabliſh itſelf, and the right of a nation to eſtabliſh a particular family;

family; and you call both theſe *rights*, deſpotiſm. Properly ſpeaking, a *right* does not exiſt in either; but a *power* does, and the exerciſe of this may be *right* or *wrong*. If a man by any means inveſts himſelf with abſolute authority, and riſes, as you call it, *over* the people, and holds that authority contrary to ſocial principles, he cannot be ſaid to be any part of the nation in a civil ſenſe; nay, though he were elſe the wiſeſt lawgiver, and the beſt of men, if he holds the government againſt the concurrence of the people, it would be proper to ſeek ſecurity of their common privileges, even in his death, becauſe there can be none but in his will or judgment; and reliance on theſe is contrary to every principle of juriſprudence. But of whatever complexion the ſtain of vanquiſhment may be, a baſtard, or an uſurper has a *right* to govern, the moment the national compact puts him in poſſeſſion of the *power*.

Your

Your objections to hereditary ſucceſſion are of a very ſhallow nature; one of which is, that "It is not legiſlation, but "teſtation; and thoſe who formed a law "of ſucceſſion, eſtabliſhed on the ſucceed-"ing generation a new and different "form of government than that under "which themſelves lived, which was a "government of choice." Will any man, with pretenſions to ſanity, ſay, that that government which was made hereditary by choice of the firſt generation, did not, thereby, at once become hereditary in every fair and legal ſenſe of the word? It cannot be denied: and, therefore, the firſt generation did not eſtabliſh a govern-ment for the ſucceeding which itſelf did not live under by choice. You ſupport your argument by a ſtrange aſſertion: "Hereditary ſucceſſion," you ſay, "can "only follow on the death of the firſt "parties;" and, by way of giving an unanſwerable proof of the truth of this, you declare (as if people were obliged to think

think you ſerious) that, " Were the ge-
" neration who ſet him (a king) up, and
" the perſon ſo ſet up, to live for ever, it
" (hereditary ſucceſſion) never could
" become hereditary ſucceſſion."

You grant, that " The parliament of
" 1688 did a thing which appeared right
" ſhould be done," in binding, at leaſt, themſelves; but, that they " aſſumed
" another right, that of binding and
" controling poſterity to the end of
" time;" but again you ſay, " There
" never did, there never will, and there
" never can exiſt a parliament, &c. &c.
" poſſeſſed of the right, or the power of
" binding and controling poſterity to
" the end of time." From this you draw a concluſion perfectly conſiſtent with yourſelf; which is, that " All ſuch clauſ-
" es, acts, or declarations by which the
" makers of them attempt to do what
" they have neither the right nor the
" power to do, nor the power to execute,
" are

" are in themſelves null and void." The following words may render the meaning of all this more plain. *The parliament of* 1688 *did a thing which appeared right ſhould be done, in making a law to bind themſelves and their conſtituents;—that they did a wrong thing, in making that law reach poſterity—which law was not a law, as it was incapable of being exerciſed, and that, therefore, it is wiſeſt and beſt for every man to be his own legiſlator and governor,* or if you will, *for every generation to make its own laws, and chooſe its own governors, if it were for nothing but to ſhew their own judgment and diſregard of the experieuce and wiſdom of all their progenitors.*

I wiſh to do every juſtice to your thoughts, and to ſift their meanings from verboſe ſuperfluity, for the purpoſe of ſeeing how they will ſtand unaſſiſted by the abuſive *trick* of language. I will take the liberty of conſidering your concluſion in another view. Theſe are your words—" All ſuch clauſes, acts, or declarations

" by which the makers of them attempt " to do what they have neither the right " nor power to do, nor the power to exe- " cute, are in themſelves null and void." This is ſaying neither more or leſs than, that *all clauſes, acts, or declarations which the* makers *have neither the* power *to* make, *or the* power *to* execute, *as they are neceſſarily* null *and* void, *can have no* being. *Clauſes, acts, or declarations imply* ſomething ;—*and muſt, therefore, be ſuppoſed to have a certain* uſe ; *if they are* null *and* void, *they muſt be* powerleſs, *conſequently* uſeleſs ; *and, therefore,* you infer *that the clauſes, acts, and declarations of the* revolution parliament, *notwithſtanding they have a* being, *and are* executed, *cannot be* ſomething, *and muſt, therefore, be* nothing. This is rebellion's logic.

Your words ſeem, already, to anticipate the waſte of deſolation ; they are dreſſed in the dark and horrid ſmiles of treacherous murder, lurking to plunge the dagger of confuſion into the boſom of peace.

Nothing

Nothing can be more phyſically true than, that a body of men cannot exiſt poſſeſſed of the POWER to bind all poſterity to the end of time; for that would be depriving poſterity of will, which would be abſurd to ſuppoſe. Nor can any body of men poſſeſs a phyſical RIGHT to bind poſterity to the end of time; to aſſert that they could, would be equally abſurd. But all that I would prove is, that if any generation, or body of men (the parliament of 1688 for example) made ſuch a law, than which a wiſer has not yet been deviſed, for the ſafety and good order of this country, it would be abſurd and morally WRONG in the people of this country to reject ſuch law, becauſe it had been made an hundred years before. This is an abſurdity for which you are a very powerful advocate, and I do allow you to be every way eloquent and incontrovertible in ſupport of it.

It is your opinion, that becauſe former

legiſlators " have no longer any participa-
" tion in the concerns of this world, they
" have no longer any authority in direct-
" ing who ſhall be its governors, or how
" its government ſhall be organized, or
" how adminiſtered." It is true, that they cannot direct *who* our governors ſhall be; and equally true, that their remains have no longer animal and reaſoning powers: but is it becauſe our forefathers have deſcended to the grave, that we ſhould not embrace their SPIRIT in the monuments of their wiſdom, and reverence the awful ſerenity of their experience and prudence, atteſted by the various occurrences of a century? To bring this ſubject nearer to our minds: if my father deviſed a law by which he had experienced any ſocial bleſſing or ſecurity, and, as far as in him lay, tranſmitted that bleſſing or ſecurity to me, without which I might be unbleſſed or inſecure, ſhall I deſpiſe his parental care and tenderneſs, by rejecting that bleſſing or ſecurity, be-

cauſe

cauſe it came from him, and was not of my own obtaining? and impiouſly inſult his memory for preſuming to make me happy, when I might be wretched? It was exactly ſimilar with the parliament of 1688; and the law by which they bound themſelves, &c. &c. was not a law of vaſſalage, but a conditional law, compacting for the ſecurity of their rights, and the rights of their poſterity; and not that thoſe rights ſhould be "willed away, con-"trouled, and contracted for, by the ma-"nuſcript authority of the dead;" nor to "conſign the people, like beaſts of the "field, to whatever ſucceſſor they ap-"pointed;" which are your no more learned than humane interpretations.

There is a ſort of original whimſicality runs through your remarks, which, when obſerved with a tolerable degree of attention, furniſhes no ſmall ſhare of amuſement. Of this ſort, is a queſtion of yours, which

which I will particularize from among many of the ſame kind, as being moſt pertinent to the ſubject before us. Theſe are your words: "Thoſe who have quitted "the world, and thoſe who a e not yet "arrived at it, are as remote from each "other as the utmoſt ſtretch of mortal "imagination can conceive. What poſ-"ſible obligation, then, can exiſt between "them; what rule or principle can be "laid down, that two non-entities, the "one out of exiſtence, and the other not "in, and who never can meet in this "world, that the one ſhould controul the "the other to the end of time?" This, I do ſeriouſly think, would make a good riddle for children in holiday time, and might for their amuſement, be put in the following form, and without the ſmalleſt injury to your ſenſe: *What are thoſe two things, each of which is nothing, one of which is out of the world, and the other not in the world; that have been, and will be, to the end of time; both equal, yet of no rank; and*

one

one governed by the other, though neither can be governed by any thing. In this form they certainly appear more myſtical than the words of the Sphynx, and require at leaſt another Œdipus to expound them.

It is inconceivable to me that any man, who wiſhes to be thought well of even by his own party, ſhould riſk ſo crude opinions as you do, and in ſo poſitive a manner too; ſuch as aſſerting that the ſocial rights of men are not within the compaſs of law; for you expreſsly ſay, that, "exclusive of the right which any generation has to act collectively as a teſtator, the objects to which it applies itſelf, (the rights of men in ſociety) in this caſe, are not within the compaſs of any law, or of any will or teſtament." This is every way falſe; for our ſocial rights are not only within the compaſs of law, but take their form from the law, and cannot be independent of it; and thoſe rights are good and ſecure, or the reverſe, as

as law is good or bad; and that act which beſt preſerves law, by any means, that beſt ſecures our rights, is wiſe and beneficial.

"Our rights," you ſay, "are not deviſ-"able, nor transferable, nor annihilable, "but deſcendable only." Our rights are deviſable, and transferable, ſo long as that law, or thoſe laws, which ſecure them, is, or are deviſed, or transferred. The rights which we now enjoy as Britons, have been transferred to us by laws deviſed at the Revolution; and are annihilable, in a ſocial ſenſe, the moment law ceaſes to be.

I think ſome diſhoneſt motives may be perceived couched under all your ſophiſtry; and if you will follow up your public opinions, put your theory into practice, and avail yourſelf of your favourite *natural rights*, which ſcorn the narrow bounds of griping and too rigid law, you will always find ſome needy printer, whoſe

preſs

preſs will work for you; ſome deſperate publiſher, who hopes to make his fortune through the medium of the pillory; the roads may witneſs your depredations, and the king may eſcape another blow from the hand of another aſſaſſin: at laſt, the leniency of pity may give you a lodging in the houſe of madneſs, where you may pine away an uſeleſs life in melancholy and remorſe! Or, luckleſsly, if iron bondage ſhould embrace your ankles within the ſullen walls of Newgate, and if you ſhould not die an heroic martyr to the cauſe of *original liberty*, mercy, even for an enemy of mankind, may give you an opportunity of founding a republic on the primative and unadulterated plains of Botany Bay.

I am,

Sir, &c.

THE AUTHOR.

LETTER III.

SIR,

HE, who would judge of another man's actions or writings, ſhould ſtudy them without paſſion, or prejudice; and, if he commit his opinions to the world, as you have done, he would be prudent at leaſt to be conſiſtent. Candour is too generous a virtue for ſome men to poſſeſs; it is a virtue that ſubſiſts with honour and truth, and retires at the approach of folly, malice, envy, or fraud. To write without candour, is to publiſh one's own ſhame; and to tell the world that all ſenſe of truth is loſt; that every propenſity to baſeneſs is alive; and that the whole

whole heart is devoted to meanneſs, infamy, and to the laſt depravity of ſhameleſs vice. Thus, Sir, you have written; and I had not expoſed myſelf to a doubt of being true, were I not every where able to produce ſuch proofs of your inconſiſtencies, and contradictions, as to expoſe the abandoned licentiouſneſs of your willing falſehood, and diſhonour. When I ſee ſtreet jeſts, and unmerited ſcurrility, let looſe upon THE FAMILY, and even THE PERSON, whoſe rank and ſituation (were there nothing elſe to reſpect) are proper to be reſpected; my country ſcandalized, its laws reviled, its conſtitution denied, its legiſlature ridiculed, and by a man too, impudently inviting chaſtiſement, and wiſhing to be noticed, even in his diſgrace, my ſcorn is awakened for the ruffian inebriated by his temerity.

Your miſcellaneous chapter, for which you ſeem to have reſerved the greater

ſtock of your wantonneſs, is a mark of your induſtry, in acquiring epithets, worthy of your purpoſe. To *you*, Mr. Burke's Reflections are no better than "a mob of "ideas, tumbling over, and deſtroying "one another;" as if in all the confuſion of vain ignorance: and it is no wonder that any man, to whom Mr. Burke could appear in this view, ſhould for ever miſtake, or miſtate him. It might be fair to aſk, why this *mob*, this chaotic maze of Reflections, ſhould have ſuch power on your feelings, and hurry you into the frenzy of revenge ſo vulgar and impotent? Mr. Burke has written againſt your cauſe; and yet you are enraged at him for his confuſion, and want of effect. You think "it is difficult to anſwer his "book, without apparently meeting him "on the ſame ground," which, without doubt, you endeavoured to accompliſh, though I cannot trace a ſimilitude of compoſition between you. But how could you ſtoop to the drudgery of *deranging*

your

your ideas? how could you have degraded yourſelf to the level of Mr. Burke? I tremble for this heretofore-thought great man, if your *victory* is in proportion to your *confuſion.* I humbly confeſs that this *mob of ideas* tranſcend the ſlender powers of my praiſe, and, therefore, I thought it becoming to leave its eulogy to the wiſe, and the claſſical. I would not have diſſuaded you from your manner of attack; I would not have prevented your *tumbling over* your own ideas; and I allow that you have *mobbed* the king, the country, lords, commons, in general, and Mr. Burke in particular, in a moſt *natural* manner, and I do not heſitate further to allow, that you are of that claſs who form the greateſt number in mobbing diſputations, and who are always ripe for rebellion, reform, revolution, or any thing, by which the regular courſe of order may be diverted, or ſtopped; and by which you may manifeſt your tender love for *liberty*, *property*, and RE-

SISTANCE

SISTANCE OF OPPRESSION. When I think of you, I feel an horror at the depravity of human nature. The mind that will contend but cannot conquer by truth, will always have recourſe to fraudulent ſophiſtry; as the coward, who dare not face a brave opponent, may be furious by being deſperate, or ſeek eſcape by wiles of ſtratagem. What opinion can we have of you, as a reformer of mankind, as a reducer of civilized ſociety into individual independence; who would erect your metaphyſical rights of man upon the ruins of experience, and the manes of reaſon; whoſe guile would hide the light of policy and law, which it cannot extinguiſh; and whoſe zeal, diſtracted with a ray of ſpeculation, would ſtrike againſt the ſtability of wiſdom, though it muſt recoil with unpitied deſtruction?

You draw a compariſon between the principles of American and German policy, and, as it is our caſe to be governed by

by a king of the houſe of Brunſwick, you would make it ſtrike againſt this country as by recoil. And, truly, your opinion is ſeconded by reſpectable evidence; for you heard a Brunſwick ſoldier ſay, "Ah! "America is a fine free country; it is "worth the people's fighting for; I know "the difference by knowing my own: "in my country if the prince ſays eat "ſtraw, we eat ſtraw!" From this eloquent and pathetic ſoliloquy you would make Mr. Burke's words, and the law of hereditary ſucceſſion, prove that England is "wanting in capacity to take "care of her-"ſelf," and you directly aſſert, becauſe England gives to a certain part of the government, hereditary powers, which may devolve upon "a foreigner, who knows nei-"ther its laws, its manners, nor its lan-"guage," that we are preparing to eat ſtraw, like your old acquaintance the Brunſwick ſoldier.

Wiſdom is a thing, you think, foreign to the ſyſtem of our conſtitution; becauſe, in

in your opinion, "it can commit the go-
"vernment of a nation to the wiſdom of
"an idiot." Without touching on the general merits of the conſtitution, there is little trouble in expoſing your ignorance on this point. It is plain you are yet to learn that an idiot, though he be the next natural heir, is precluded, by law, from the enjoyment and poſſeſſion of the ſmalleſt freehold in the country. And can it be ſuppoſed that that law, which keeps from an idiot his right by ſeniority, would give the government to the care of a perſon whom it thinks incapable of governing himſelf? If every king were to govern in right of his wiſdom only, the greateſt fools would be the earlieſt claimants; and this country might have the honour of ſeeing Thomas Paine a candidate for the regal chair.

You no doubt would govern by your favourite rule, and the principle which the Marquis de la Fayette ſo ſtrongly recommends,

commends, *by ſentiments which nature has engraved on your heart*; and *mouldy parchments* would no longer have authority with you. The Marquis de la Fayette cries out, emphatically, to the living world, to "call to mind the ſentiments that nature "has engraved in the heart of every ci-"tizen; and which take a new force when "ſolemnly recognized by all." And to do this, in your mind, is better than to abide by the wiſdom of your anceſtors, or any expreſſed law that marks a line between your rights and wrongs. The Marquis de la Fayette may be a well meaning man; and he ſeems to have full as much bravery as information; but, you, Sir, who profeſs to write with the olive twig; you, who boaſtingly ſoar over the wide regions of metaphyſics, and can penetrate through all the darkneſs of intervening ages, at once to the creation of man; you, who are the confident of hiſtory, and a living microcoſm in yourſelf; you, I ſay, cannot expect your adoption

of theſe words to paſs current, until they are tried by the teſt of reaſon, and found ſtandard at leaſt. What are the ſentiments which nature has engraved in the heart? If they are *natural*, they cannot be *acquired*, but muſt be *innate*. I have heard of innate *ideas*, though they are now almoſt univerſally denied; but the doctrine of innate *ſentiments*, is a ſpeculation entirely new. Let any man trace the origin of his ſentiment—Will he find it in his heart? No: he will find it in ſome external cauſe; and his mind, which received it, impreſſed it on the tablet of his memory. Yet you call upon the *ſentiments* that nature has engraved in your heart, as a nobler and more true ſource of civil rights, than "*muſty records and mouldy parchments*, and ſummon all mankind to recognize them! —let them firſt be *cognized* before they ſhall be *re*-cognized. The following part of theſe ſtrange words is made applicable only to the nation. "For a nation "to love liberty, it is ſufficient that ſhe "knows

" knows it; and to be free, it is ſufficient " that ſhe wills it." A nation may be conſidered as happy, that has a proper ſenſe of its freedom, and knows how to manage it. In this caſe it were impoſſible not to love freedom. But that the freedom of a nation depends upon its will, is an aſſertion of too ſhallow and indefinite a complexion to be treated ſeriouſly. It is not for the people of this country to reſt their underſtandings upon your words, or thoſe of any member of the National Aſſembly of France; nor will they believe becauſe you and the marquis de la Fayette ſay, *let a nation will herſelf to be free, and ſhe ſhall be free*, that ſhe is thereby free. True civil freedom is of a tender nature, and difficult to mature; ſhe does not ſtart forward into life and vigour at the call of *natural equality*, nor *individual ſovereignty*; but ſhe is nurſed by the experience of ages, and brought to our minds, all beautiful as ſhe is, by wiſdom, temperance, and juſtice. Where now is

the value of thoſe *ſentiments* which *originate* in the heart, that cannot be explained, nor even imagined; thoſe *ſentiments* which you call "clear, conciſe, and ſoul-animating," and which you think "lead to "a vaſt field of generous and manly "thinking;" and which are every way oppoſite to the *reaſoning* of Mr. Burke, which you ſay is "dry, barren, and ob-"ſcure;" and whoſe "flowers" and "argument" are "ineffectual," becauſe he refers to "muſty records, and mouldy parchments?"

It is not at all ſurpriſing, that a man who daſhes at any thing, and every thing, without the toil of thinking twice, ſhould ſo often aſſert, deny, and confound the ſame things. You appear to be an ignorant man, and yet you make ignorance a topic, applying it to particular governments. You firſt ſay, "it is of a peculiar "*nature*," and next, that "it is not originally a *thing* of itſelf, but is only the *abſence*

" *fence* of knowledge," and that it may be " *kept*," but not " *made*." This is a curious definition indeed!—If ignorance has a *nature*, it muſt be a *thing*: but you ſay, No;—ignorance, according to you, is a *natural nothing*.

You wiſh to be droll on Mr. Burke for calling 'the rights of men in government 'their advantages,' and for defining what thoſe rights may be. You ſuppoſe Mr. Burke's readers incapable of underſtanding what you call his " aſtrological myſterioufneſs;" but you do not diſcover even an affectedly-modeſt doubt of your own apprehenſion in the expoſition of it; and you tell the world (aſtrologically I ſuppoſe) Mr. Burke means neither more or leſs than, that " government is arbi- " trary power." Do you remember the the moon's age when you interpreted this?

Mr. Burke ſays 'government is a con-

'trivncea

" trivance of human wiſdom;' you admit it, and think his own words condemn him. You ſuppoſe " this ground is fatal " to every part of his cauſe;" for you think " it muſt neceſſarily follow, that " hereditary ſucceſſion and hereditary " rights can make no part of it, becauſe " it is impoſſible to make wiſdom here- " ditary." This you call *ſwabbing the deck:* and ſay, that Mr. Burke has expunged every name from the liſt of kings, and " mowed down our nobility with " a ſcythe as formidable as Death and " Time." Here are many big words with little meaning. Becauſe wiſdom cannot be made hereditary, you declare it to be unwiſe to make ſucceſſion and rights ſo, and conſequently, that hereditary ſucceſſion and rights can make no part of the wiſdom. This may be diſmiſſed with a very ſhort diſproval. You admit that *government is a contrivance of human wiſdom:* and, by admitting thus much, you muſt neceſſarily admit, that in whatever degree of

of comparative wiſdom our government may ſtand, it muſt be wiſe; and by afterwards denying this, you make your own concluſion, *that it is not wiſe*, plain nonſenſe; for it is attempting to prove that wiſdom is fooliſh.

Mr. Burke does not ſatisfy you, becauſe he has not ſhewn from whence the wiſdom that forms government originally came.—Mr. Burke calls it '*human wiſdom*:' and as this origin is not old enough to pleaſe you, you muſt only *continue* to aſſert that it is *older than the creation*, Mr. Burke, you ſay, "has not ſhewn by what "authority it firſt began to act;" for which you think he is much to blame. It is pleaſant enough to demand of Mr. Burke, or of any other *human being*, by what *authority human wiſdom* firſt began to *act*. Will any fair reaſoner ſay, that becauſe Mr. Burke calls governments teſtimonies of human wiſdom, and becauſe he does not prove from whence human wiſdom

dom originally came, that he is, therefore, an advocate for uſurpation alone?

Your averſion to kings ſeems to be of a moſt rooted nature. Were they a race below the human ſpecies, you could not look down upon them with more inſolent contempt. In your eyes they are beings of no virtue, nor utility; and your reaſon cannot tell you "what thoſe men are "kept for." "What is this metaphor "(you aſk) called a crown, or rather "what is monarchy? Is it a thing, or is "it a name, or is it a fraud? Is it a con-"trivance of human wiſdom, or of hu-"man craft, to obtain money from a na-"tion under ſpecious pretences? Is it a "thing neceſſary to a nation? If it is, in "what does that neceſſity conſiſt, what "ſervices does it perform, what is its bu-"ſineſs, and what are its merits? Doth "the virtue conſiſt in the metaphor, or "in the man? Doth the goldſmith that "makes the crown make the virtue alſo?

"Doth

" Doth it operate like Fortunatus's wiſh-
" ing-cap, or harlequin's wooden ſword?
" Doth it make a man a conjurer? In
" fine, what is it?" Through what happy medium have you furniſhed your mind with rhetorical flowers, ſo brilliant, lively, and witty? Where is that ſchool of oratory in which you received your education; and where do your inſtructors of elocution flouriſh; I am inquiſitive becauſe I believe it to be a ſtyle that never was uſed in any academy, ſince the Athenian grove. But, to ſatisfy your interrogations in the only manner they deſerve, I believe there is juſt as much analogy between your tropes, and the virtues of our monarchy, as there is between yourſelf and good manners, modeſty, education, and refinement.

" In America (you ſay) monarchy is con-
" ſidered as an abſurdity; and in France
" it has ſo far declined that the goodneſs
" of the man, and the *reſpect for his per-*

"*ſonal character*, are the only things that "preſerve the appearance of its exiſt-"ence." You unqueſtionably think the Americans a wiſe people, and they may be ſo; France you conſider as the very goddeſs of wiſdom, juſt ſtruck from the head of Jove; they both conſider monarchy abſurd, and one of them preſerves its appearance, to *compliment* a *good man*. This may be very wiſe, though I cannot ſee it; but it appears to me the moſt ironical, and degrading *compliment* from the people of France, to their ſovereign, to hold him up to the univerſe as the very *ſpirit*, and *being* of *abſurdity*, becauſe they have *a reſpect for his perſonal character*. From hence you would infer that we are willing victims to a continued abſurdity. "Mr. Burke" you ſay, acquaints "the world that a certain body of men "made a law an hundred years ago, and "there never can exiſt a *power* in the na-"tion to alter it." This ſtatement is falſe and diſhonourable; for Mr. Burke does not

not *deny*, but he *aſſerts* the *power* of the nation. But you ſhameleſsly draw a concluſion, for Mr. Burke, from your own words, telling us that he is an advocate for divine right of kings; in as much as any power inveſted in a king, muſt be more than human, which no human power can alter. Mr. Burke ſays, 'I 'ſhall beg leave, before I go any further, 'to take notice of ſome paltry artifices, 'which the abettors of election, as the 'only lawful title to the crown, are rea-'dy to employ, in order to render the 'ſupport of the juſt principles of our 'conſtitution, a taſk ſomewhat invidious. 'Theſe ſophiſters ſubſtitute a fictitious 'cauſe, and feigned perſonages, in whoſe 'favour they ſuppoſe you engaged, when-'ever you defend the inheritable nature 'of the crown. It is common with them 'to diſpute as if they were in a conflict 'with ſome of thoſe exploded fanatics of 'ſlavery, who formerly maintained, what 'I believe no creature now maintains,

" that the crown is held by *divine, heredi-*
" *tary*, and *indefeaſible right.*"—' Theſe
' old fanatics of ſingle arbitrary power
' dogmatized, as if hereditary royalty
' was the only lawful government in the
' world; juſt as our new fanatics of po-
' pular arbitrary power maintain—that a
' popular election is the ſole lawful ſource
' of authority. The old prerogative en-
' thuſiaſts, it is true, did ſpeculate *fooliſhly*
' and, perhaps, *impiouſly* too; as if mo-
' narchy had more of a divine ſanction than
' any other mode of government; and as
' if a right to govern by inheritance,
' were, in ſtrictneſs, *indefeaſible* in every
' perſon who ſhould be found in the ſuc-
' ceſſion to a throne, and under every cir-
' cumſtance; *which no civil or political right*
' *can be.* But *an abſurd opinion, concerning*
' *the king's hereditary right to the crown,*
' *does not prejudice one that is rational, and*
' *bottomed upon ſolid principles of law and*
' *policy.*' This, I ſuppoſe, is a ſufficient
refutation of your charge.

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Not ſatisfied with imputing this irrational doctrine to Mr. Burke, you charge him with a violation of the very compact he defends, with repreſenting the *king* as holding the *nation* in *contempt*; and even defending this contempt, on account of a penſion which, you ſay, he is *ſuſpected* of enjoying. Mr. Burke's words are: 'The 'king of Great Britain is, at this day, 'king, by a fixed rule of ſucceſſion, ac-'cording to the laws of his country; and 'whilſt the legal conditions of the com-'pact of ſovereignty are performed by 'him, (as they are performed) he holds 'his crown in contempt of the choice of 'the Revolution Society, who have not a 'ſingle vote for a king amongſt them, 'either individually, or collectively.' You aſſert, that "though Mr. Burke "points this at the Revolution Society, "it is, effectually, directed againſt the "whole nation."

By what ſtrain of imagination, by what appli-

application of language, by what metaphorical ingenuity, can you prove the Revolution Society to be the nation? You ſhift the expreſſion, for the purpoſe of inflaming the vulgar againſt their king; and by it endeavour to work upon the weakneſs of their minds, and to ſhake their allegiance. I grant that "the Re-"volution Society is compoſed of citizens "of all denominations, and of members "of both the houſes of parliament:" But notwithſtanding this, they cannot have, either *collectively*, or *individually*, a vote, not only for a king, but for any part of the conſtitution, either in cauſe or effect; for the words *collectively* and *individually*, when applied to the Revolution Society, (and Mr. Burke applies them to nothing elſe) can have no other meaning than a *part*, or a *whole*, of a *thing unknown to the conſtitution*. I take the liberty of going farther on this point than Mr. Burke has done, without meaning the moſt diſtant diſreſpect to any individual member of

the

the Revolution Society, by ſaying that his Majeſty *does not hold his crown in contempt of their choice*; for that would prove a knowledge of their exiſtence in his Majeſty! but that, from their political *non-entity*, they cannot awaken even the paſſion of contempt in the mind of a king of Great Britain. And yet, to me, deſpotiſm, in any ſhape, is as frightful as it can poſſibly be to you; and I will be always ready to manifeſt my zeal for civil liberty.

But giving all you aſk, admitting that the nation was meant; is the nation to fly to arms; to pull down the pillars of the conſtitution; to ſuppoſe itſelf in chains, and paying for every link, becauſe Mr. Burke ſays the King holds them in contempt? Mr. Burke, Sir, is not the King, nor do his words come from the throne. Why then in ſo unmanly a manner, with ſo little generoſity, in ſo complete an abſence of honour and truth, endeavour

to

to divert the feelings from Mr. Burke and his Reflections, (ſuppoſing them to be arbitrary) to the king and conſtitution, and to warp every vulgar mind by your miſterious and inſidious reaſoning? Why endeavour to rend that conſtitution which has not been impaired by time, nor condemned by wiſdom? Why endeavour to plant doubts and fears in the breaſts of mutual confidence; and to tear aſunder the attached dependance of the people on the conſtitution and their governors, and of the king on the people? But to ſcatter diſſention over a nation, to rouze the ſleeping ſtorm of diſcord and ſedition, are worthy only of the man who throws himſelf from ſociety in his principles, and comes forward the ſingle prodigy of uncivilized individuality; the ungoverned lord of appetite and paſſion; the chimera of reaſon; the amazement of credulity, ignorance, and diſaffection.

It is well, however, that the goodneſs

of

of our conſtitution may be found in the greatneſs of our power and in the height of our political conſequence. Our fleets, our armies, our influence in every court with which we have occaſion to confer, are effects of the goodneſs of our conſtitution. Enquire of the huſbandman, if he is not rewarded for his advancement of agriculture? of the mechanic, if his ingenuity is not ſtimulated by honour, and his induſtry ſweetened by ſolid returns of plenty and contentment? of the merchant, if commerce does not repay the anxiety of his nights, with the wealth and produce of every nation? Look to the exerciſe of our domeſtic laws. Our cultivated lands and ſmiling harveſts feel not the deadly ſterility and blight of a tyrant's will; and the healthy and jocund labourer, though ignorant of the wiſe cauſe of his happineſs, is taught not to fear a power unknown to the moral ties of his ſmall circle of friends. See if the children of the deepeſt poverty (few as they are

in compariſon with other countries) are not protected, with the ſame vigilance and tenderneſs as the very frame of the conſtitution, and as the very heart of civil liberty.

There are ſome men ſo radically bad, that to them, the exerciſe of good operates as a real evil; and the harmony of nations appears but a diſcord; the regular gradations of ſociety, are unnatural diſtortions; the ſweets of civilization, mere infirmity of mind; knowledge, nothing but confuſion and miſtake; delicacy of taſte and paſſion, but flimſy depravity; joy, but folly; contentment the true ſignal of ſlavery; and the beauty of truth, worſe than the petryfying power of a Gorgon. It is uſeful ſometimes to behold the uglineſs of vice, that we may love virtue the more; as it is by compariſon only, that our judgments gather ſtrength. The employment of ſuch men, is to place truth upon the clouds, and to give her a varying form,

form, and a fleeting ſubſtance, as private motives may require. But they may *not* know the immutability of truth. I am ſometimes unwilling to blame them. There is ſomething ſo ſuperlatively bad in a willingly vicious man, that I could be perſuaded to ſuppoſe his misfortune might be the effect of nature in a cruel moment. A man of this caſt, has a ſort of claim upon ſociety to be provided for. If he has it not in his power to be good, he is not properly within the cognizance of law: he ſhould not only be pardoned, but compaſſionated. Every country, nay almoſt every town, has its fool or its idiot, who is ſuffered to be at large; and it is every where called unmanly and criminal to injure him. He is an object of every body's charity and benevolence. A bad man is his own tormentor. Fools and idiots have not ſenſibility enough to be either happy or miſerable. The bad man, therefore, ſeems to have the greater claim on our humanity; and if not regarded with

peculiar care and tenderneſs, ſhould at leaſt be conſidered on a footing with fools and idiots.

Yet ſuch is he whom a certain collection of men, that call themſelves the Conſtitutional Society, have thought proper to introduce to Engliſhmen as a leader in revolt and rebellion, by honouring him with their public approbation; and by which they would endeavour, indirectly, to ſtain with wickedneſs and diſgrace, a man illuſtrious for his knowledge, talents, and virtue; a man of honourable deſign; whoſe exquiſite ſenſibility has often been taken for weakneſs or diſſimulation, but which, upon every proper occaſion, ſtimulates and brightens the dignity of pride, and directs his ſight above the level of the inſiduous. A rigid cenſor on himſelf, he moulds the rectitude of his own breaſt. Reſolute in his opinion when once determined. Often too profound for the vulgar; he is conſequently

quently made by his enemies, an object for misrepresentation, which they have seldom suffered an opportunity of doing to escape. Grown too regardless of what is called popular praise; for to be the more enabled to do public good, it is almost necessary to continue to be publicly beloved. Conscious of the purity of his intentions, he seems now too ready to retire within himself for peace and consolation, from certain public slights, which ill repay his labours and the many services he has done this country.

The Constitutional Society upholds a person who would give this country anarchy, under the deceitful and alluring name of natural rights of men, which have not been stamped with the sanction of experience. The *Constitutional Society* strive to depress the man who clings to the *constitution*, and to those RIGHTS which our forefathers bequeathed to us as valuables of the most precious nature, and whose

whoſe lives were always ready to be ſacrificed in their ſupport.

I cannot reſiſt quoting from Mr. Burke, a beautiful picture of ſociety, as modeled and united by the rights reſulting from our excellent conſtitution; ſoliciting at the ſame time every one to examine it with attention, and then judge for himſelf between the reality of our *ſocial rights*, and the *unreal natural rights* aſſerted, but not maintained, by you:——

" You will obſerve, that from Magna " Charta to the Declaration of Right, it " has been the uniform policy of our " conſtitution to claim and aſſert our li- " berties, as an *entailed inheritance* derived " to us by our forefathers, and to be " tranſmitted to our poſterity, as an eſtate " eſpecially belonging to the people of " this kingdom, without any reference " whatever to any other more general or " prior right. By this means, our con-

" ſtitution

" ſtitution preſerves an unity in ſo great
" a diverſity of its parts. We have an
" inheritable crown; an inheritable peer-
" age; and an Houſe of Commons and a
" people inheriting privileges, franchiſes,
" and liberties from a long line of an-
" ceſtors.

" This policy appears to me to be the
" reſult of profound reflection; or rather
" the happy effect of following Nature,
" which is wiſdom without reflection,
" and above it. A ſpirit of innovation is
" generally the reſult of a ſelfiſh temper
" and confined views. People will not
" look forward to poſterity, who never
" look backward to their anceſtors. Be-
" ſides, the people of England well know
" that the idea of inheritance furniſhes a
" ſure principle of conſervation, and a
" ſure principle of tranſmiſſion, without
" at all excluding a principle of improve-
" ment. It leaves acquiſition free; but
" it ſecures what it acquires. Whatever

" advantages

" advantages are obtained by a ſtate pro-
" ceeding on theſe maxims are locked
" faſt, as in a ſort of family ſettlement;
" grafped, as in a kind of mortmain, for
" ever. By a conſtitutional policy, work-
" ing after the pattern of Nature, we re-
" ceive, we hold, we tranſmit our go-
" vernment and our privileges in the ſame
" manner in which we enjoy and tranſ-
" mit our property and our lives. The
" inſtitutions of policy, the goods of for-
" tune, the gifts of Providence are hand-
" ed down to us, and from us in the ſame
" courſe and order. Our political ſyſtem
" is placed in a juſt correſpondence and
" ſymmetry with the order of the world,
" and with the mode of exiſtence decreed
" to a permanent body compoſed of tran-
" ſitory parts; wherein, by the diſpoſi-
" tion of a ſtupendous wiſdom moulding
" together the great myſterious incorpo-
" ration of the human race, the whole at
" one time is never old, or middle aged,
" or young; but, in a condition of un-

" changeable

" changeable conſtancy, moves on through
" the varied tenour of perpetual decay,
" fall, renovation, and progreſſion. Thus
" by preſerving the method of nature in
" the conduct of the ſtate, in what we im-
" prove, we are never wholly new; in
" what we retain, we are never wholly
" obſolete. By adhering in this manner,
" and on thoſe principles to our forefa-
" thers, we are guided not by the ſuper-
" ſtition of antiquarians, but by the ſpi-
" rit of philoſophic analogy. In this
" choice of inheritance we have given to
" our frame of polity, the image of a
" relation in blood; binding up the con-
" ſtitution of our country with our dear-
" eſt domeſtic ties; adopting our funda-
" mental laws into the boſom of our fa-
" mily affections; keeping inſeparable,
" and cheriſhing with the warmth of all
" their combined and mutually reflected
" charities, our ſtate, our hearths, our ſe-
" pulchres, and our altars."

" Through the ſame plan of a confor-
" mity to nature in our artificial inſtitu-
" tions, and by calling in the aid of her
" unerring and powerful inſtinct, to for-
" tify the fallible and feeble contrivances
" of our reaſon, we have derived ſeveral
" other, and thoſe no ſmall benefits, from
" conſidering our liberties in the light of
" an inheritance, always acting as if in
" the preſence of canonized forefathers;
" the ſpirit of freedom, leading in itſelf
" to miſrule and exceſs, is tempered with
" an awful gravity. This idea of a libe-
" ral deſcent, inſpires us with a ſenſe of
" habitual native dignity, which prevents
" that upſtart inſolence almoſt inevitably
" adhering to, and diſgracing thoſe who
" are the firſt acquirers of any diſtinction.
" By this means our liberty becomes a
" noble freedom. It carries an impoſing
" and majeſtic aſpect; it has a pedigree
" and illuſtrating anceſtors; it has its
" bearing and its enſigns armorial; it
" has its gallery of portraits, its monu-
" mental

" mental inſcriptions, its records, eviden-
" ces, and titles. We procure reverence
" to our civil inſtitutions on the principle
" upon which nature teaches us to revere
" individual men, on account of their age,
" and on account of thoſe from whom
" they are deſcended. All your ſophiſ-
" ters cannot produce any thing better
" adapted to preſerve a rational and
" manly freedom than the courſe that
" we have purſued, who have choſen
" our nature rather than our ſpeculati-
" ons, our breaſts rather than our inven-
" tions, for the great conſervatories and
" magazines of our rights and privile-
" ges."

I am,

Sir, &c,

THE AUTHOR.

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